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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RAICHEV (Bulgaria)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of Mr. Khan (Pakistan), Mr. Raichev (Bulgaria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 88: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued) (A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/229, A/49/256, A/49/307, A/49/378, A/49/381, A/49/395, A/49/412-S/1994/1078, A/49/422-S/1994/1086, A/49/424 and Add.1, A/49/479, A/49/493-S/1994/1142, A/49/506, A/49/541, A/49/542)

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(h) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/49/572)

(i) UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION (continued) (A/49/287-S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/541)

1. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that the international community continued to face the same problems of development as in the past. While the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations was a welcome development, there were signs that it was the developed and the more aggressive developing countries which stood to benefit most from the new agreements. The powerful continued to apply various protectionist measures while numerous conditions were imposed on the trade of the developing countries. Despite recent improvements, long-term projections of the prices of commodities from the developing countries were unfavourable. Many countries, particularly in Africa, were still haunted by the threat of famine, while industrialization remained a dream for most of them.

2. One might therefore conclude that economic and developmental problems would continue to exist for a very long time. History showed that conclusion was more

realistic than pessimistic. What was important, therefore, was to address the specific problems of the day and to seek solutions that were both available and acceptable at the time.

3. That was the task in which the United Nations was currently engaged. The note by the Secretary-General entitled "Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership" (A/49/542) marked an important contribution to the debate on that issue. The note followed the changes in national and global concerns and interests over the years, the interplay of those interests, the emergence of new actors and the evolution of the concept of partnership in achieving international goals. It was important to continue dialogue and consensus-building, taking into consideration the links between peace and security on the one hand and prosperity and development on the other, and between political, economic and social concerns. Dialogue emphasized the fact that human beings were the key participants in and the principal beneficiaries of economic growth and development.

4. Dialogue must, however, be accompanied by a determined effort to enable people throughout the world to pursue their development more efficiently, to become more self-reliant and competitive without losing their appreciation of interdependent activity, and to face the world intelligently, realistically and with honour and dignity. Finally, dialogue should generate the political will to make improvements wherever possible in order to ensure a suitable quality of life for all peoples.

5. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) said that the plight of certain least developed countries was further complicated by natural and man-made disasters, including war. The dimension of war, which was present not only in Afghanistan but also in other countries of Asia and Africa, was a new and unfortunate aspect of underdevelopment in the final years of the twentieth century.

6. Afghanistan was particularly interested in the current efforts of the international community to address the needs and problems of the newly independent and developing land-locked States in Central Asia and their transit developing neighbours. General Assembly resolution 48/170 had recognized the need to improve the efficiency of the current transit environment in those countries, and the Secretary-General's report on the subject (A/49/277) contained an assessment of the current situation and proposals for future action. That report, however, represented a first approximation only towards a fuller elaboration of more concrete programmes of action for dealing with the issues.

7. As both a land-locked and a transit country, Afghanistan supported the recommendations of the Meeting of Governmental Experts from Land-locked and Transit Developing Countries and Representatives of Donor Countries and Financial and Development Institutions on priority areas and modalities for further action to improve transit systems in land-locked and transit developing countries. The lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness and isolation from world markets, and prohibitive transit costs and risks

imposed serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development efforts of those countries, whose access to world markets was dependent on the establishment of a multi-country transit system. Given that most transit countries were themselves developing countries facing serious economic problems, including the lack of adequate infrastructure in the transport sector, international support for both developing land-locked States in Central Asia and their transit developing neighbours must be strengthened.

8. In that regard, bilateral cooperative arrangements and regional and subregional cooperation and integration had a vital role to play. It was particularly important to elaborate a programme for improving the efficiency of the current transit system, including better coordination between railway and road transport in the newly independent and developing land-locked States in Central Asia and their transit developing neighbours. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should therefore continue to evaluate the transit systems of the Central Asian countries, especially the shortest access routes to the south, by undertaking studies of corridor proposals for submission to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

9. Donor countries and multilateral financial and development institutions should also provide land-locked and transit developing countries with appropriate financial and technical assistance in the form of grants or concessional loans for the construction, maintenance and improvement of their transport, storage and other transit-related facilities, including alternative routes and improved communications.

10. In addition, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), should undertake studies in the following areas: harmonization of payment systems for transit services; identification of administrative, institutional and commercial barriers to transit, including the improvement of transit management systems; elaboration of a legal, administrative, institutional and regulatory framework to govern transit operations, with particular emphasis on multilateral and bilateral transit agreements; and replacement of existing transit agreements and bilateral arrangements by new ones, in conformity with the current requirements of the transit trade in the land-locked and transit countries concerned.

11. It would also be useful for the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary of ESCAP and the executive heads of other relevant regional organizations, to organize a regional symposium in 1996 for the newly independent and developing land-locked States in Central Asia and the transit developing countries to evaluate the results of the suggested corridor studies and to agree on an appropriate follow-up programme of action.

12. Afghanistan welcomed the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), although its full participation in that body would depend on receipt of the appropriate technical assistance from international agencies.

13. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), he wished to propose that the question of the reconstruction of human settlements destroyed by war should be included in the Conference agenda.

14. Mr. HONG Je Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) endorsed the statement made on agenda item 88 by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Turning to item 88 (h), he noted that more than 1 billion human beings lived in extreme poverty, more than 500 million suffered from malnutrition, and 6 million children in developing countries died each year as a result of both. Meanwhile, two more Member States had recently been added to the list of least developed countries. There was no question that poverty was worsening and that there was a growing disparity between poor and rich. The international community must therefore act with urgency to create an external economic environment that promoted the efforts of the developing countries to eliminate poverty. The major responsibility in that regard fell to the developed countries.

15. In proclaiming 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, General Assembly resolution 48/183 had recognized how basic such a goal was to ensuring lasting peace and achieving sustainable development throughout the world. It was encouraging that an ad hoc working group within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development had begun to prepare a programme with clear-cut objectives and actions to be taken in observance of the Year at the national, regional and international levels.

16. The World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 1995, should provide a unique opportunity to devise an effective international strategy for the elimination of poverty by the year 2000 and to adopt a programme of action specifying practicable measures to achieve that goal.

17. His Government, guided since the earliest days of the country by juche ideology, which placed people at the centre of development, had, in pursuance of that policy, introduced a number of practical social measures, including 11 years of free and compulsory education, free medical care, and free housing. It had also been providing agricultural assistance to African countries, in the spirit of South-South cooperation.

18. Mr. ALIOU (Cameroon), speaking on agenda item 88 (c), drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD (A/49/226) and said that the commodity situation was extremely important for developing countries, whose economies relied essentially on the production and marketing of such products for their growth and development. The current instability of global commodity markets and the sharp drop in commodity prices was thus a source of grave concern to those countries. The hopes they had placed in the Uruguay Round had been largely disappointed. The obstacles to equitable trade flows had not been removed, inequitable terms of trade persisted, commodity prices were too low and barriers had been erected to deny products from developing countries access to world markets. Moreover, the preferential treatment traditionally given to some of the developing countries' more crucial products was threatened by a new kind of protectionism in the form of social and environmental legislation. Africa alone

had lost $2.6 billion as a result of the Uruguay Round, and its share of the world market had fallen to only 2 per cent. That, together with population growth, had caused per capita income and nutritional standards to decline.

19. The world community must therefore act to ensure sustainable development for all. It must create conditions for a free, transparent global market offering just, stable and predictable prices and it must take steps to compensate the countries most affected by the new market conditions. Developing countries must be helped to modernize their production and distribution systems, stabilize and increase their earnings and diversify their economies, particularly in the commodity sector. The proposed diversification fund for Africa's commodities was an essential step in that direction.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.